

Peacefakers, Peacebreakers, and Peacemakers

Pt. 1: The Slippery Slope of Conflict

1. In groups, describe a time you wished you had known more about how to resolve conflict.
2. Four “G’s” of biblical peacemaking
 - 1) **Glorify God** (1 Cor. 10:31 – “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”)
 - 2) **Get the Log out of your own eye** (Matt. 7:5 – “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”)
 - 3) **Gently Restore** (Gal. 6:1 – “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”)
 - 4) **Go and be reconciled** (Matt. 5:24 – “Leave your gift there before the alter and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”)
3. How would you define conflict?
4. Four basic causes of conflict
 - a. **Conflict defined:** a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.
 - b. The four basic causes:
 - i. Misunderstandings resulting from poor communication
 - ii. Differences in values, goals, gifts, callings, priorities, expectations, interests, or opinions
 - iii. Competition over limited resources, such as time or money
 - iv. Sinful attitudes and habits that lead to sinful words and actions (Jas. 4:1-2)
 - c. Conflict and Faith, hope, and Love
5. The Feelings Wheel and the Slippery Slope of Conflict
 - a. **The Feelings Wheel**
 - a. Which of the secondary emotions do you experience most?
 - b. For you, what’s actually underneath that visible emotion?
 - c. How are primary emotions necessary for resolving conflict?
 - b. **Escape Responses (Peacefaking):** *People tend to seek escape when they want to avoid conflict instead of resolving it, especially in the church, where many believe that all conflict is wrong or dangerous. (Escaping prolongs conflict)*
 - a. **Denial:** Pretending the conflict doesn’t exist or refusing to do what is necessary to resolve it properly
 - b. **Flight:** Running away by leaving the house, ending a friendship, quitting a job, filing for divorce, changing churches.
 - i. Sometimes temporary withdrawing from a situation in order to calm down and pray may be best.
 - ii. In threatening circumstances (physical or sexual abuse), flight may be necessary. However, running usually only postpones solving the problem.

- c. ***Suicide***: When people believe they've lost all hope, they may attempt to take their own lives. Suicide is never the right way to deal with conflict.
- c. **Attack Responses (Peacebreaking)**: *People use these when they care more about winning a conflict than about preserving a relationship. Often people view a conflict as a chance to control others, assert themselves, or take advantage of someone. (Attacking destroys the relationship)*
 - a. ***Assault***: Overcoming an opponent by verbal attacks (including gossip and slander), physical violence, or trying to damage a person financially or professionally.
 - b. ***Litigation***: Taking someone to court.
 - i. Lawsuits usually damage relationships
 - ii. A Christian's witness can be damaged severely. The Bible commands Christians to settle their disputes out of a court when possible (1 Cor. 6:1-8)
 - c. ***Murder***: Killing someone who oppresses you. We are also guilty of murder when we harbor anger or hatred (1 John 3:15; Matt. 5:21-22).

**Peacemaking can be challenging. Without looking below, what are some ways to pursue peacemaking by avoiding the escaping or attacking responses? **What would motivate you to do so?*

- d. **Peacemaking Responses**: A true peacemaker is guided, motivated, and empowered by the gospel – the good news that God has forgiven all our sins and made peace with us through the death and resurrection of his son. He has now given us a ministry of reconciliation, and we imitate him most clearly when we also become peacemakers (2 Cor. 5:13-21; Matt. 5:9).
 - a. **Personal Peacemaking**
 - i. ***Overlook an offense***: A deliberate decision to forgive – that is, not to talk about the offense, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness and anger. (Prov. 19:11: “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.”)
 - ii. ***Reconciliation***: Resolving personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness.
 - iii. ***Negotiation***: Working through material issues related to money, property, or other rights. This can be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which persons reach a settlement that satisfies each side's legitimate needs.
 - b. **Assisted Peacemaking**
 - i. ***Mediation***: If a private agreement cannot be reached, then objective, outside people can meet with parties to help them communicate and explore solutions. Mediators may question and counsel, but they have no authority to force a solution.
 - ii. ***Arbitration***: When a voluntary agreement cannot be reached, you may appoint one or more arbitrators to listen to both sides and decide how to settle the issue.
 - iii. ***Accountability***: If a professing Christian refuses to be reconciled, Jesus commands the person's church leaders to formally intervene to hold the personal accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness (Matt. 18:17). This loving and restorative act can be the key to peace and restored relationships.

Next Week, Jeremiah will teach Pt. 2: “Conflict Provides Opportunities”